

Letter 170.

by James Bourne

James Bourne's sermon reflects on the importance of divine guidance, humility in worship, and the assurance of God's presence amidst struggles.

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5, Matthew 5:4, Mark 2:17, Hebrews 12:6, James 4:8

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Godly Obedience"

Description

James Bourne writes a heartfelt letter to Mrs. Oakley, reflecting on their shared experiences and spiritual growth. He emphasizes the importance of seeking the guidance of the Lord in all aspects of life, especially in times of distress and uncertainty. Bourne encourages Mrs. Oakley to remain teachable, reverent towards God's word, and to embrace the correction and chastening of the Lord as a sign of His love. He commends her courage in standing apart from worldly influences and urges her to continue in prayer, humility, and obedience to God's will, while expressing concern for Mr. Oakley's spiritual well-being and the need for him to seek God's mercy and forgiveness.

Transcript

London, 2 November 1839.

Dear Mrs. Oakley,

I cannot help calling to mind the manner in which I first became acquainted with you, and how afterwards myself and family resided in your house. I was exercised often in much prayer that the Lord would direct me that I might not speak after the wisdom of the flesh, but that our family worship might be attended "with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Though I cannot boast of wisdom or superior light, yet I must say that the Lord in his all-wise and overruling providence has given me many advantages by an enlightened and faithful ministry; having fixed the bounds of my habitation here, where not only, is the truth preached, but the continual communication with the afflicted people of God has been a very fruitful, instructive, and humbling lesson to me. These means it has pleased God in a measure to deprive you of. Perhaps on this account I was enabled to discover many things in which you were hood-winked, and wherein you lived very short of your privileges. I was much comforted often to see how teachable your spirit was, and how you were enabled to pass over the weakness of the instrument, and to pay great reverence to the word of the Lord; and this again made me the more earnest in secret that I might have the presence and approbation of the Lord, and that I might myself enjoy the comfort and liberty I set before you.

I had many distressing fears, and sometimes severe conflicts almost to despair, even while I was at your house; but the Lord always appeared, sooner or later. At one time, when I seemed ready to give all up, fearing exceedingly I was not right in speaking as I did to the poor people at Pulverbach, these words came with great sweetness and power, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of his correction; for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." In the strength of this I found great liberty to speak, and it assured me that the Lord had directed my way, and that it should not be in vain. Besides I often found the sweet and comforting presence of God, when I was with my family in your little room; I was quite sure that the Lord was with us, for I perceived that he opened your eyes upon many things that you had not laid to heart before, some of which had brought you into great bondage.

I was much encouraged when you told me of the courage the Lord gave you to read Jude to the people that assembled with such levity, under the pretence of visiting a sick friend. How it showed me that the Lord had indeed drawn a clean line of separation between your spirit and theirs. This I believe is the gulf that God has fixed between his people and all carnal professors; they that would pass here cannot, for they cannot understand that this secret distinction rests entirely with them that fear him, and they alone shall share in his covenant.

Let me entreat you to pray to be kept very tender, and not seek to pass the line that God has drawn. I perceive he has made you very observant; be sure to keep in mind what you felt when little Becca brought you the tract, and the scripture which then first caught your eye; let it never slip from your heart - "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications." This Spirit will always bring us very low in our own estimation, to feel and understand in a measure the exceeding sinfulness of sin; and then what follows will indeed make us sober-minded - "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn for him, and be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." There is nothing that will bring us down like this, nor anything that will prove so safe and profitable, or make us so careful and tender in our walk; for here we learn that everything that is untoward in us is a fresh piercing of him, and this will bring us quickly to confession and many earnest prayers for a fresh discovery of Christ's mercy to us.

I hope Mr. Oakley has not forgotten to ask for the crumbs that fall from the Master's table; tell him despair is the worst of sins, and that the Lord delights in all that hope in his mercy. How I grieved that the enemy should so overpower him as to prevent his joining us in family worship! He ought to know that all sorts of sinners and sins are pardonable; "ALL MANNER of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Why will he lie in his bed in direct opposition to God? It is most fearful. There can be no good come of direct disobedience to God. May the Lord help him from henceforth to call upon his name; and may God bless you with a daily increase of godly fear.

Yours &c. J. B.

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